

THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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PREPARATION FOR A GENERAL ELECTION

Some Opportune Hints

In our article in the February issue, a distinction was drawn between plans for developing a healthy and effective organisation, which required some time to develop, and plans that involved clearing the decks for action in view of a threatened general election. Hints on the latter point will bear keeping yet, though, as indicated, wise officers will already have a plan of what they would do. In this article we hope to give some advice on the ever necessary attention to the effectiveness of the ward and district organisation that will take the territorial burden of the fight.

If you have not got organisations in every ward and district, you cannot fill up too soon. This work can never wait, and it is a dangerous thing to leave weak points to be manned with strangers. There are people who will vote Labour *everywhere*. There are *no* districts where there are *no* Labour supporters. If this is alleged, it might be as well just to examine whether it is Labour politics your Party has been preaching or whether they have been donning the Labour mantle to advocate something else.

The task is to *find* those elements. There will be, of course, places where one might never get enough local workers, but a local nucleus can and must be got, and the time is now. Different districts require differing treatment. You are out for discovery. Your first aim is to discover someone or some ones who will form a germ; however timid, or isolated, a little germ is better than none at all.

There are two methods. Literature distribution and canvass, or public meetings. The first is slow but sure;

the second will succeed in most districts, and it ought to succeed in all. Meetings often effect no result because the wrong type of speaker is employed, and more often because local parties have not sufficiently studied the art of *reaping* from what is sown at meetings. You must read the LABOUR ORGANISER in other articles for hints on this point; it may present your whole problem.

Policy plays a part in waking up some areas. Don't forget that a Fabian lecturer has his uses. However red and rabid you may be, there are people who subscribe to the same fundamentals, but who have approached them in an "intellectual" atmosphere. I have found Parties who could never get going in the majestic middle-class areas, though they bawled themselves hoarse on Sunday mornings and certainly woke up the precincts. To imagine that the residents of these places are all opposed to you because they don't like your syruppy voice and blatant aggressiveness, not to mention the red tie, is quite wrong. These classes are trained to more retiring ways and critical examination. Don't sneer at their culture because you lack it and Society has denied you its blessings, but seek to meet them on their plane by providing the right sort of educated speaker at indoor meetings. Here again, a word of warning. For goodness sake eschew those handful of fools in this category who are so class-conscious that they feel that in coming over to Labour their connections might so damn them that they must seek our confidence by advocating the extremist policies that are extant. Undiscerning "comrades"

anxious for a "left-winger" often fall quite nicely here, and when the wild intellectual has been found out they fall to reviling all his genii. A really thoughtful man of well-balanced reason, and not a crank, will serve you better.

Beyond straining every effort to get some local organisation everywhere, it is opportune to test what you have got elsewhere. Trot round to the ordinary local meetings in turn, and don't specially summon them. This gives the surest indication of the areas in which interest is flagging. It is sheer rubbish to content yourself with the idea that attendance will pick up as an election comes near. The work done *now* will count four times as much as work left till then.

If ward and district organisation is slacking, you must devise some means of getting interest and good meetings again. Probably they want work. Have you given them any?

No ward or district, however small, should be without its portion of the register. This suggests and provides work. It is also an excellent plan to encourage these committees to discuss the work of election time, and to get all of them familiar with the usual operations, the register, and the variety of ways of helping. Never so conduct your central business as to let the ward and district committees feel unimportant. If you do, you must not be disappointed to find your army of local workers is but a phantom corps. Insist on their meeting, see there is work and business for them, that they get finance and information, and don't make the error of turning these meetings into propaganda stunts. These meetings are for business.

It is from ward and district meetings that the central agent or secretary will supplement much of the local information that requires to be prepared. From them also he will make mental notes of the fit, in view of the staff required for the election. A man trained in your own local committees (if he *has* been trained and *has* worked) is worth pounds more than the moocher

who touts round for jobs at election times, and whose only local knowledge is the names of the principal pubs.

Now is the opportunity for a general stocktaking of the Party's position. What is the Party's standing? Has some speaker or incident done you harm? Is the candidate making headway? Is he really known? Are your opponents pulling up? Easter is over, but still self-examination may go on. There are several other questions that might be asked, but obvious courses present themselves whatever the replies may be. If anything is wrong, it is folly to let matters slide. There's a course, and a *paying* course, to be taken in each event.

Relationship to the rank and file of the trade unions is of paramount importance. If not all that can be desired, take steps accordingly. A popular speaker, rank and file conferences, and many other avenues open up. But of all symptoms, this one must not be overlooked. It is worth some trouble to cure.

(To be continued)

FOR THE WAISTCOAT POCKET

We are indebted to Mr. John Baker, of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, for drawing our attention to a dainty little pocket calendar issued by the Wandsworth Labour Party from their headquarters, 142 Garrett Lane, S.W.18. The card, opened flat, is 6 in. by 3½ in., and this, folded into three, fits nicely into the waistcoat pocket. The card contains a calendar, photo of the candidate (Councillor Blizard), postal information, weights and measures, lighting-up time, sunset and sunrise, &c., and is altogether useful. It is possible that some of the information might be dispensed with, and the "third" part used as a certificate of membership. Those adopting this device might do this with advantage, and so add to utility a constant reminder of the Party in a personal form.

CONFERENCE OF LOCAL LABOUR NEWSPAPERS

Altered Date, May 21

The proposed date of the above conference having been found unsuitable owing to its clash with the Whitsun holidays, the succeeding Saturday has now been selected, and the conference will take place on May 21, in the Fabian Lecture Hall, 25 Tothill Street, Westminster, at 3.30 p.m.

The interest already aroused has been considerable, and a large and successful conference is assured. Circulars have now been sent to all known Labour local newspapers, and to all known bodies contemplating the publication of same. It is obvious that this still leaves out of count numbers of interests and, possibly, publications that are not officially known to the editor of the LABOUR ORGANISER. Application by such should at once be made for copies of the circular. The editor will be deeply obliged to any person bringing to his notice any movement or paper that has apparently been overlooked.

NEWSPAPER NEWS

Good news for local editors. The price of paper is still falling. The *Birmingham Post*, which gives one plenty of paper for the money, is among the first to reduce its price from 2d. to 1d. After all, it is fair, is it not, to expect the Press, which supports demands for pre-war wages, to itself return to pre-war prices. The *Post* has not done that, for advertisement rates are very much "up."

Several fresh announcements of new Labour local papers are to hand. We believe that most of these could be made weeklies if only the movers of similar ventures could be got together in suitable areas for co-operation.

One of the most ambitious and, we understand, extraordinarily successful recent ventures is the *Walthamstow*

Municipal Gazette. This is a large quarto, twelve pages and cover, production, which includes local political news, comments, special articles, sports page, &c. Thirty thousand copies are distributed gratis each week—a huge additional task which the Parliamentary agent apparently conducts—and the price for extra copies is 2d. The advertisement income to cover this heavy cost must necessarily be large, but apparently advertisers have appreciated the exceptional medium offered, and we gather that the local organisers have splendidly turned the corner in this respect, while the copies and advertisement rate to hand bear corroborative evidence. If we may venture a suggestion, it would be that, as early as practicable, a local news reporter should be set on, for this would add immensely to local interest, and would more firmly attach the advertisers who appreciate a thing that they know is read in every home.

The *Torch* is the title of a gallant little paper that has beaten bravely on for two years in North-East Kent. An extension of its circulation under friendly auspices to all parts of Kent is now in contemplation. Advertisements are badly needed, and a reduction of its price to a penny by their means would be a timely and desirable thing. The articles are thoughtful and altogether interesting.

The *Mitcham Citizen* is a Labour local obviously under capable editorship, for, within the limits of its six crown folio pages, the editor has produced a variety that results in an all-round pleasing production. We get leaders, special articles, Labour news, local notes, "crispetts," medical column, gardening column, pithy paragraphs, and home hints—also a good beginning with advertisements. All that is needed to make this the "compleat" Mitcham newspaper is general news, both local and national. But this is the great and crying need of almost all Labour "locals."

OUT OF THE RUT

I have received a number of literature samples from Agent Hargreaves, of Gainsborough, and I do not think a brighter or more original collection has yet reached me. The collection includes some smart U.D.C. literature (and I note that the candidates have won), May Day streamer, collecting books, &c., and all of it is more than usually striking. It is interesting also to note that a workshop canvass is being done, and that special measures are being taken to cement the trade unionists and women voters to the Party. Gainsborough has launched its 100,000 shilling fund, and that is a sum none too high to aim at, and none too much if obtained. The sum is required to aid in fighting the Parliamentary seat, and for U.D.C. and C.C. elections—presumably, also, for general organisation. The collecting book is a model in attractiveness, and contains all the best features; a useful one is a series of pointers on how to help your agent. Verily, Gainsborough is waking up, and he who scoffs at the 100,000 shillings fund because it is bold should be fined one of them for his temerity, and be sent out with a book and bell to gather in the harvest.

One of the signs of Party growth during the last few years has been the number of new Labour clubs opened, and, in many cases, the purchase of premises for them. The little town of Evesham in Worcestershire affords a striking example of enterprise and success in this direction. Experiencing the usual effects of contraction due to local difficulties in holding meetings, &c., the Party (which is quite young, though courageous enough to run its own candidate at the General Election) determined, last year, to enter into an hitherto unknown freedom. The result was the purchase of an historic building and the Town Drill Hall, on one of the best sites in the town, and opposite an open public green, which

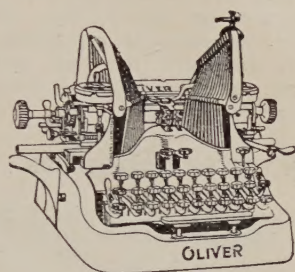
presents an ideal site for demonstrations. The ancient grammar school, for such it was, has been converted into a prosperous club, and money is being made, while the Drill Hall holds the Party's weekly propaganda meetings and social functions. The site of the club is opposite the embarking stage of the buses, &c., which carry thousands of trippers to this smiling fruit country during the summer. Therefore catering, in the season, is an obvious temptation, and is, we understand, to be undertaken. The story of the coming of Labour to the little Worcestershire town is a tale worth telling some time. Meantime, it is an encouragement to the many local Parties who are contemplating similar enterprises.

The special problem of Labour in London, and again in large divided boroughs (where some aspects are similar, though the problem is less huge and complex), has been referred to before in these columns. The especial need of attention to the peculiar organising problems involved, and the equal need of informative matter for those who may be termed the "public persons" of the Party, are matters that it is encouraging to note are continually met through the Central Office of the London Labour Party. The *London Labour Chronicle*, the *Councillor*, the *Organisation Points*, and the *Municipal Circulars*, all edited by Herbert Morrison, form an armoury that undoubtedly is helping efficiency very much. Almost everywhere the Party needs strength in these very directions, and the divided boroughs present an excellent opportunity for some imitative plan on these lines. It is good to note that in Birmingham a suggestion has been informally made for a local bureau that, working in close touch with municipal matters, should serve very similar functions. The Labour Party is to-day so large, and its interests so far flung, that wherever it is massed, as it is in divided boroughs, in London, and in such congested areas as the

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Black Country, there is a real need for research and information bureaux, concentration on the peculiar and particular problems in organisation involved, in short, for just such services as the London Labour Party is leading in.

OUR POSTER COMPETITION

As announced in our last issue, the prizes in Classes 2 and 3 of our recent Poster Competition were held over owing to insufficient entries.

We therefore again offer these prizes for competition, and would especially urge our friends to ask their printer friends to compete. Agents and secretaries who are capable of drafting good bills should venture their chances. *The prizes will be materially increased if justified by the merit of the attempts.*

£5

Five pounds is offered for the most effective letterpress poster design suitable for printing off in quantity for later localisation. Designs may contain a block or letterpress illustration, but striking and pleasing design and gripping power will be the guiding principle in judging attempts sent in. Paper may be either white, red, or gold. Competitors able to send their attempts ready printed should do so, but if sketches are sent marginal notes should indicate size, name, and character of type suggested, standard thicknesses of rule used, &c., and the same with ornaments. Designs will not be disqualified by virtue of reproduction being preferable by lithographic process.

£2/10

This sum is offered for the best displayed meeting bill. Letterpress printers may send samples of work *already done*, or sketches (under the rules laid down in Class 3) of a suggested meeting bill of ordinary wording. Taste, general attractiveness, and appeal will again decide the issue.

The general rules of our previous competition apply to this one.

Closing date, April 30, 1921.

LAW AND PRACTICE

[Under this heading we propose to print brief and chatty explanations of points of commoner interest concerning the Law and Practice of Elections. Readers are invited to suggest points for notice herein, but are reminded that suggestions made may not necessarily be dealt with in the next issue.—ED.]

Some Questions Answered

(1) *Please say what is the time allowed for nominations and poll at a Parliamentary by-election?*—The times were varied as regards boroughs by an Act passed last year. Nominations are not later than seven days after the Returning Officer receives the writ, with an interval of not less than two clear days between the day on which he gives the notice and the day of nomination. The poll takes place not less than six or more than eight clear days after the nomination. For a county division, the Ballot Act enactments remain unaltered in the case of a by-election, and the dates are—Notice of election, not later than two days from receipt of writ; Nomination, not later than ninth day after receipt of writ, but an interval of not less than three clear days must be allowed between notice and nomination; Poll, not less than two or more than six clear days after nomination.

(2) *Is it absolutely necessary to appoint an election agent at a Parliamentary election? What is the legal fee?*—It is absolutely necessary to notify the appointment of an agent, but such person may be the candidate himself who may act as his own agent. Such a mad and freak proceeding cannot, however, be condemned too strongly. The responsibilities of a candidate are ordinarily heavy enough, and so are the legal risks. But in assuming the functions of the agent, the candidate divests himself of his last safeguard, and assumes a responsibility for every half-penny of expenditure and the actions of members of his party that is altogether foolish. It robs him of protective clauses in the

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Corrupt Practices Act of extreme value. The practical disadvantages are also great, and the absence of an intermediary between both workers and paid staff, or with the enemy, is a very sore handicap.

Regarding the fee, there is a very common misconception that has arisen out of words inserted in the Representation of the People Act, 1918. It is there laid down, to explain it simply, that expenditure in excess of £75 for an agent in a county division, or of £50 for a borough, ranks against the total expenses of 7d. and 5d. per elector permissible as election expenses. It will thus be seen that the figures are neither maximum nor minimum, and, indeed, an agent may be quite honorary or employed at any figure in excess of £75 or £50 which the position with regard to maximum expenses allowed. The National Association of Labour Registration and Election Agents has adopted the figures mentioned in the Act as its standard.

(3) *Is a printer's imprint necessary on my letter-heading at an election?*—If the notepaper is going to be put to its legitimate use it does not fall within the category of things requiring imprint to comply with the Corrupt Practices Acts.

THE LOCAL SECRETARY'S PAGE

Help and Hints in Season

One of the minor troubles of secretaries is that of finding chairmen for meetings. It is no unusual thing to find an officer, after a meeting is due to commence, frantically canvassing the audience for a chairman, and finally dragging forth the most incompetent man in the room. It is a good plan to keep a panel of chairmen for public meetings, and to arrange well beforehand. Mr. Wilkinson, of South Hants, has a good plan, and below it is reproduced. No. 1 is a skeleton letter, of which a large number

are duplicated. It is sent out with No. 2 as an inclosure, and it will be observed that both forms are clear and concise and drawn with commendable brevity.

No. 1

DEAR.....

I shall be extremely obliged if you will act as chairman at a meeting to be held on.....

at.....

Speaker.....

Subject.....

An early reply will oblige.

Yours sincerely,

C. W. WILKINSON,

Secretary.

No. 2

DEAR SIR,

I shall be ^{unable} ^{pleased} to act as chairman at the meeting on.....

at.....

Yours, &c.,

THE SECRETARY,

SOUTH HANTS LABOUR PARTY.

There is still a great deal of haziness about postal rates. If yours is an important central secretaryship, the current Post Office Guide, with its two supplements (total, 1s. 6d.), is worth purchase. Many postal facilities are almost unknown. For instance, are *you* aware that a telegram sent just before closing time, and that would not ordinarily reach its destination that night, can in many cases be made to reach by instructions as to telephoning? Or again, you desire to

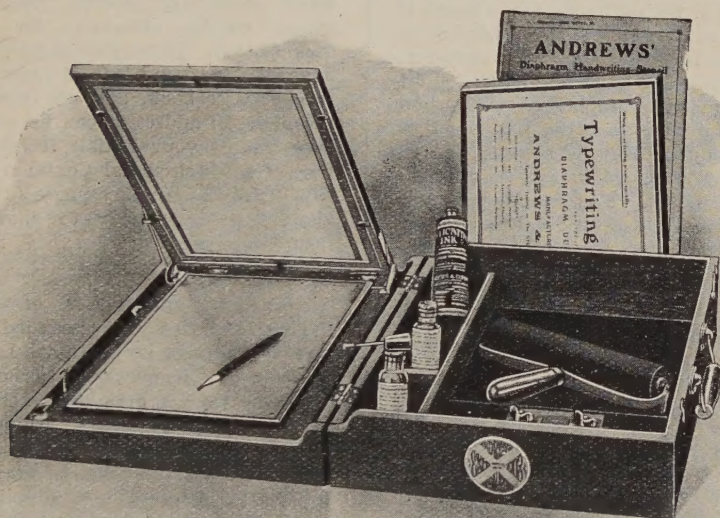
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reach the Labour Party early next morning with a report of a subject discussed at your meeting long after posting time. If there is an all-night telegraph office in your town you may send a wire of thirty-six words for 9d., if handed in before midnight, and it will be delivered with the letters next morning.

Many people make mistakes in posting circulars. If the circular is printed, and particulars have been merely filled in, the circular may be posted in the ordinary way, though if there are many it will save postal work to hand them over the counter. Imitation typewritten circulars, that is, a machine duplicated or carbon copied matter, *must* be tied together and handed over the counter, and a declaration signed in respect of them (Form P.241). You cannot post less than twenty at a time unless you pay full letter rate. I have myself, when requiring a lesser number, found it cheaper to send extras to some friend, or even to address back to myself, rather than pay 2d. on each envelope. This is in confidence.

He is a lucky man who escapes with but one secretaryship. The tendency in our movement is for a man to be secretary of two or three local organisations together. This is not the best arrangement, but needs must one suppose. Duplication of offices such as this calls for some very clear demarcation, both mentally and in the material side of one's work, to avoid confusion. It is, first of all, important to keep accounts and charges distinct; never should these be allowed to be in arrear, and, however small the office, keep an account book for it.

When we come to the use of stationery, one frequently gets a living example of the spirit of communism. Yet this is hardly as it should be, and is apt to be very confusing. Any organisation worthy of a name should

have its own letter heading, even if frequent changes of officers render inadvisable the printing of their names. It is not difficult to keep supplies separated in a drawer by sheets of blotter if you have no other accommodation. In regard to envelopes, my own practice has always been to buy in bulk and debit each organisation with a proportion, splitting the supply up accordingly. This is the only fair and practicable thing. It is with the postage that most people get slovenly. The best plan I know is to buy a small supply of stamps, with the stamp edging attached, for each organisation. These should be pasted down the left-hand side of pages in a long counter book, and, as torn out, the name of addressee can be written opposite, or your initials if required for a series of circulars. Common sense will dictate how many pages may be allotted to each body to allow for future purchases.

An increased number of Local Parties have this year convened their annual meetings on National Labour Party lines. The method is to send out in ample time a preliminary circular to all affiliated bodies, asking for resolutions, delegates, &c., thus securing discussion in many branches. Later, the delegates are supplied in good time with the agenda and credentials, and the affiliated bodies also receive this, thus getting yet another useful discussion and, perhaps, instructions to delegates. The whole method tends to incite interest, and often a competition for delegateship in the branches—a particularly healthy sign. The plan has been in operation in several Midland constituencies for two or three years and results in really fine meetings. A delegate fee is sometimes levied for these meetings, and in practice this has rather tended to increase the attendance than to detract from it. Of course, the whole procedure throws more work upon the secretary, but results surely are a compensation.



ABOUT POSTERS

Come to think of it, why should a Poster degenerate into a sheet crammed with the largest and ugliest work of the woodcutter ?

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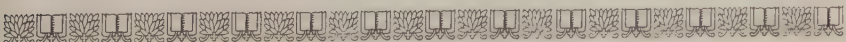
Q The Secretary of the Tonbridge Divisional Labour Party writes :
"Many thanks for proofs of Poster. I like it very much and must thank you for producing something out of the common as I suggested."

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We have not space to answer all these questions, but they go to show that the customer considers the printer has only one class of article to sell, and that the lowest price accepted will secure the same article as will the highest figure asked.

This may be true of some printers. The quality of printing and the dignity of all craftsmanship suffered as a moral effect of the war, but it is a mistake to assume that a job is economic merely because it is printed at the lowest obtainable price.

When you pay thirty shillings for your hat, you expect that hat to do something more for you than the cheaper one. Has it occurred that a few shillings per thousand copies extra on printed matter may be money well spent ?

An additional colour, a little whiter paper, half-an-hour extra in display—little sacrifices to the side of luxury—these may add dignity to the subject matter ; and who to-day laughs at the psychology of touch or the appeal to mind through the eye ?

Think it over, ye buyers of printing, then send your printing to the firm that is *conscious* of the need of these

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Assistant Secretary, Trades Union Congress

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INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

What Shall They Pay?

According to the constitution of the Labour Party, local Parties may admit men and women members to their individual sections at *minimum* contributions of 1s. and 6d. per annum respectively. How many Parties have taken those sums to be *maximum* or standard contributions obligatory upon them, and continue to this day to enrol members on these altogether unprofitable terms? A good many I am afraid. Even were those contributions ever financially sound, and I do not agree, there is a great difference between the value of the money at the time the rule was drafted in 1917 and at the present day.

In this article we will leave out of count the debatable point as to whether there should be a reduced fee for women membership and devote attention to the general question of an all-round higher payment. But, in passing, let me remark that the general moral we shall draw that the minimum should be higher, and greater use made of elasticity in payment, applies with equal force to women membership. The interest that rests on a payment of 6d. per year can never be so great as that involved in a higher and more regular payment, while there is a world of difference in what a poor family-burdened housewife can pay and that which an unencumbered middle-class woman can afford. Nor should the same be expected.

There is a general moral in these things which is as sound as a bell, but nevertheless may lead us into some errors. To make people pay for their politics is the surest way to secure their sustained interest. It is perhaps, unfortunately, even more potent than to have a good cause. But the whole art lies in first *training* them to pay. You can easily scare away novitiates, and overburden your own pockets, by charging the atmosphere of the Party with the echo of "pay, pay, pay." I am all in favour of tiny regular contributions, *unobtrusively* collected,

and these keep away the burden of heavier calls, infrequently made, but which may fall just as new members have come in. And the unobtrusive and quiet systematic collection by collectors affords scope for higher contributions by those who can afford it, without ill effect on poorer members.

The most successful local Parties have members paying on scales from 1d. to 6d. per week; and I have actually seen higher sums being paid. There are collectors, and in some cases commission is paid; in others prizes are offered. But, as pointed out, for the enthusiasts to make a general custom too high, *without* ample elasticity for poorer members, is to keep the latter away, with attendant losses both moral and material. If I were asked for a general scale applicable as a start in most districts, I would suggest 2d. per month for women and 4d. per month (1s. per quarter) for men. The difference in contribution here is not so real as it looks, for the women have a paper of their own, the *Labour Woman*, costing 2d. monthly, and the contribution might be expressed alternatively as 1d. per week (4d. per month) *including* the paper. In poor districts both the above minima might be halved, but a lesser sum than that is unprofitable financially, does not lend itself to quarterly or monthly division (and has therefore defects I am about to deal with), while it involves many supplementary efforts, and so defeats its own object.

I want to make the case against the annual "bob" quite clear. In very many cases—in most men's cases—it merely represents a spasm of goodwill and a donation to the funds. It is not conscious membership at all. In many women's cases, too, the item demanded is so small that the payment is easier than the refusal, and here again after-interest flags.

These contributions are difficult to renew. Last year I tested numbers of constituencies, and found the non-renewals very considerable. This year

I have again inquired after the renewals in several constituencies, and, in spite of secretarial optimism and expectation, it is clear that the shilling has lost its glitter. The "bobs" are not forthcoming.

This is in striking contrast to districts where regular collections are made, and the explanation is largely psychological. With the huge examples in insurance, trade unionism, and "weekly payments," is there any need to point out the psychological suitability of regular political payments also? A further truth is that, when the second annual contribution is demanded, many have forgotten all about the first one. One has to do the work of canvass and conversion for it all over again, and if the moment is not as propitious as on the first occasion, it doesn't come off. One has, too, to explain this time the *value* received for the previous payment.

Where regular and frequent contributions are collected, the member has not forgotten by the time of the second payment the comparative recency of the last one. There will be *interest* right enough, and one may have to explain what the Party is doing. But that's excellent, and that contact with the member is a golden opportunity. You will get better attendances this way, more workers, and certainly infinitely better collection of contributions. If you cannot so far justify your Party's activities as to secure the small renewal contribution, your Party almost deserves to lose it. The questions that are asked will be healthy for the Party.

The considerations above given to working-class temperament, customs, and tendencies are all important to a Labour Party which must base its rules, contributions, activities, and policies with a due regard for them. On *what* and *how* the workers pay depends ultimately the new social order itself.

(Next article in this series, "*Special Campaigns for New Members.*")

THE BERMONDSEY CANVASS CARD

By Councillor A. J. BAMFORD, Agent

Many members of my profession are of the opinion that the present standardised canvass card is out of date. This opinion is held by many of the active workers in my own constituency, and I have been induced to draw up suggestions for a new canvass card in keeping with the ever-advancing ideas of new and modern methods for the creation of electoral efficiency. The Bermondsey movement has now accepted my draft card and our orders are already in the printer's hands.

The card looks complex in theory, but in practice it is a much more simple and more efficient piece of machinery than the type of card which we have buried with joyous chants for the funeral rites.

The card is 4 in. by 3½ in., and must be of fairly good quality stiff board. The cover should be slightly larger than the actual card in order to keep the records of the canvass in good condition. The cover should be of a different coloured card. The cards are bound together in streets (where streets are too long, in blocks) by means of a pair of steel hinge clips through punch-holes in each of the top corners of the cards. The result of this method is that the cards may be revolved backward or forward without bend or crack in the material. They can be written up by the voluntary workers and clipped together as required, the canvass proceeded with, and when completed they can be filed as a permanent record.

It might be difficult to standardise such a card, but it is certainly possible. The cost of such a card works out *cheaper* than that generally in use.

The new-type card can be produced for 10s. 3d. per 1,000, and could be produced for much less if ordered in lots of 500,000.

I am by no means a lover or an advocate of the canvassing system, but while it remains in vogue in electoral contests Labour should possess a card giving the very highest return of efficiency.

THE COVER—FRONT

WEST BERMONDSEY PARLIAMENTARY DIVISION

Book Number..... Ward.....

Street
Road
Lane
Buildings

Nos..... to

4 in.

This book and the cards inside it form a permanent record, and an endeavour MUST be made to mark the cards clearly and keep them in a clean condition.

3½ in.

THE COVER—BACK

After canvassing, enter date and signature :—

Date

Signature

4 in.

3½ in.

THE CARD—FRONT

WEST BERMONDSEY PARLIAMENTARY DIVISION

Regd. No. Ward

Name

Address

Trade Union..... Branch

For Against Doubtful Dead

--	--	--	--

Removed to

Yes No

Any interest in Labour Party ?	...	...	...
In I.L.P. ?	...	...	...
In <i>Bermondsey Labour News</i> ?	...	...	...
In Women's Section ?	...	...	...

4 in.

3½ in.

THE CARD—BACK

Council
ElectionsGuardians
ElectionsL.C.C.
ElectionsParliamentary
Elections

REMARKS

4 in.

3½ in.

THE WOOLWICH FIGHT

By C. NEW

The result of the great fight culminating on March 2 has caused considerable comment and has been the object of discussions which have for their aim the desire to find some reason or reasons for the failure of Labour to maintain its position in East Woolwich.

Apart from the aspect caused by the introduction of a candidate whose political views were considerably in advance of those held by the retiring member, and to the lingering in the minds of the electorate the battles of Abbey Wood and Plumstead Common, there are other phases of the psychology of electioneering which one may well consider.

Although to a large extent we are carried along by the general trend of events, we will look at some of the methods of conducting the campaign. In the first instance the agent is faced with a candidate of the first water—a man of national importance to the movement—a man whose ideas and whose great strength in politics are well known. Is it cause for wonder then to find great interest is taken in the various meetings, packed halls being the order of the day some time before the meetings are due to commence.

This state of affairs is further supported by the desire from a national standpoint that success should crown the candidature, and that national speakers are tumbling over one another to render assistance. The result is that first-class platforms are provided, tending to further increase the pressure on the available accommodation at the meetings. The platforms further attract Labour supporters from the surrounding constituencies, adding to the acuteness of the position.

The opposing side now start, and, Labour being to the fore in the booking of available halls, the opposition take to the street corners. Labour follows suit, bringing capable speakers into the

constituency, and the fight outside begins in earnest.

Doorstep work is the great aim during the election period, and appeals for workers are made.

On arrival, they are set to work assisting to bring to the notice of the electorate the aims of the Labour Party and their candidate.

Supporters organise a trade union demonstration, which is carried out with great enthusiasm and much shouting, and we begin to see some of the results of the methods of working. Take first the indoor meetings with their large audiences. The effect of the magnificent speeches of the candidate, and of the great national speakers, is to develop enthusiasm to its highest pitch. This may also be encouraged and desired by the candidate, thus bringing matters to a head more quickly, but we submit this result tends to give a false impression of the actual position of things. It keeps the local workers away from the more effective work which they should be doing. The outdoor meetings are also largely attended, especially where the speakers are witty, and the question arises whether they would not be better employed upon the doorsteps. [Who? Speakers, audience, workers, or all of them—ED.]

Other supporters, as remarked, gather the trade unionists together and run a demonstration. It is most successful as these things go: great enthusiasm; great shouting; the half dozen unemployed or superannuated members carrying the branch banner in the breeze. The effect upon the electorate, however, is a negligible quantity. Polling day now arrives, and a large number of workers come forward to assist; so much so that each committee room has a big quota of assistants.

The constituency is small and compact and easily overstocked with workers. All looks well, but the declaration of the poll leads to the conclusion that the whole trend of electioneering must now be viewed from a different standpoint to that

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hitherto generally taken. Enthusiasm may tend to satisfy the desires of the candidate until the result of the poll is declared. It may also satisfy some of the supporters of the candidate, but the effect upon the general electorate, we must submit, is the reverse of that desired. The quiet, ordinary citizen who keeps his politics to himself, hearing the shouting and singing of the demonstrators, or attending the meetings to find himself in the midst of a cheering gathering, is not impressed with the power of Labour to govern; for government is not done by shouting, but by hard, solid consideration of the position involved. Neither is any ice cut by the jocular cynicism which may be very well in its way, but even your opponent has his point of view and believes seriously that he is right. Further, the non-political voter—the one who increases the percentage of the poll—is aroused by the extraordinary happenings mentioned, which may be a good thing from a democratic point of view, but bad for one or other of the political parties, the one that plays the lowest game winning his support.

To appeal to the good sense of the man whose house "goes up steps" (however much some of our supporters may be inclined to belittle his advanced views) we must adopt quieter methods, cut the outdoor meetings, prevent too many big guns attending the meetings, give the candidate plenty of time to speak and to elaborate his points and to answer questions, keep enthusiasm within reasonable limits, and on polling day see that the constituency, if small, is not flooded by workers who, by calling too many times, rouse the voter who seldom votes and is the turning point of many elections.

The people are more educated, more thoughtful—looking for higher things than those provided by the old-time election methods. Let us give a reasoned argument for the faith that is within us, devoid of the band, banner, and shouting, and we shall then take with us the worker, both by hand and by brain.

EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED

A Move on at Gloucester

In view of the number of inquiries as to what we have done in this city in dealing with the unemployed, this article will perhaps serve as a guide to my fellow agents.

On February 1 we had over 2,000 men and women, young and old, on the Labour Exchange list. On February 7 the I.L.P. introduced a resolution at the delegate meeting of the Trades and Labour Council (this is the recently united Gloucester Labour Party and the Trades Council), and it was decided to organise the unemployed.

On February 15 an indoors meeting was called of the unemployed. The bills had been distributed at the Labour Exchange. This meeting was addressed by Labour guardians, councillors, and myself, and a committee was formed of seven unemployed to act with the executive committee of the Trades Council. It was decided to press for special meetings of the guardians and the city council to discuss unemployment. Deputations were selected to attend both meetings.

We proposed to get the local bodies to agree to the following policy:—
 (1) To provide work or adequate maintenance; (2) To put into operation the Act for the feeding of school children; (3) The council to instruct their committees to accelerate schemes to provide work, and to demand grants in aid from the Government for road work; (4) The guardians to use their special powers under Article 11 of the Relief Regulation Order of 1911; (5) To form a distress committee, consisting of eight members each from the city council, board of guardians, and the Trades and Labour Council, also two each from the local employment committee and the Labour Council.

A large number of open-air meetings were held, at which we urged the unemployed to demonstrate by march-

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ing to the workhouse and to the council with the deputations. The guardians appointed a special committee, on which Labour was well represented. The morning they met, the unemployed marched to the workhouse, and we held a meeting in the grounds and sent in a deputation to the committee, who expressed agreement with our case. In preparing our case, slips were given to the unemployed asking for the following particulars :—Name and address, how long unemployed, total income per house, number of dependants, what trade union they were members of. From these particulars the following sample of 100 cases was compiled :—

No income, 25 cases. Dependants, 74.

Income less than 15s. per week. 11 cases. Dependants, 43.

Income 15s. net per week, 25 cases. Dependants, 85.

Income £1 net per week, 39 cases. Dependants, 150.

<i>Summary</i>		£	s.	d.
Total weekly income for the 100	... ..	64	12	6
Less rents, at 6s. per week	...	30	0	0

Balance £34 12 6

Total dependants, including the 100 who signed the forms, 452 persons.

Weekly average per person for food, clothes, and fire, 1s. 7d.

Each member of the deputation was instructed to deal with certain parts of our case before the public bodies. The guardians called a special board meeting at 11 a.m. on March 9. The deputation and the unemployed met at 10, and headed by a band which was playing in the streets which we borrowed, and with a banner stating "Gloucester unemployed demands work or maintenance," we marched through the city to the workhouse, arriving there at 10.45. The guardians received the deputation and decided to agree to the proposed distress committee and appointed their members, also to put into operation the Relief Order quoted elsewhere.

This is the scale of relief :—

	Per week		
	£	s.	d.
Single person, widow, or widower	0	15	0
Man and wife	1	10	0
Man and wife and one child	2	0	6
Man and wife and two children	2	10	6
Man and wife and three children	3	0	0
Man and wife and four children	3	9	0
Man and wife and five children	3	17	6
Man and wife and six children	4	5	6

with an additional allowance of 8s. per week for each child over six in number. Scale to apply to children under sixteen. Half the amount to be paid in cash, the other half in goods.

In most cases the people get tickets for the half in kind, and they can go to their own shop. In assessing the amount of relief, account is taken of all sources of income, except that no notice is taken of an amount of 5s. received from a friendly society, trade union, &c. The Labour Exchange payment, if stopped, is paid to the persons on the relief work by the guardians in a similar way to the scale. Thus it will be seen that some men with large families are now getting more from the guardians than they have been getting as wages. It has also stayed the hand of employers in reducing wages.

The special council meeting was held on March 11, and the Guildhall was packed as a result of the procession of the unemployed. Deputation put the case again, and the council agreed to the formation of the distress committee, and it is now meeting each week as an unemployment committee, with the town clerk as secretary.

The mayor announced that the council sent a deputation to the Ministry of Transport on March 9, and had obtained grants amounting to over £10,000, and that the council hoped to provide work for about 300 men on road work. The education committee decided not to put the

Act for feeding the children into operation, but to refer any cases to the medical sub-committee, and, pending its next meeting, arrangements are made for 1,000 cooked dinners to be available for children at the national kitchen, free of cost.

The chairman gave me permission, publicly, to go to the committee with any cases I know of where children ought to be fed.

Another important detail is that the chief organiser should get interviews with the chief members of the local bodies before the meetings are held. Through this method, the mayor agreed to move and support the formation of the unemployed committee. The result is that over 200 persons applied the first week to the guardians, and they are put to various jobs for not more than forty hours per week, not as work for wages, but as relief work under the outdoor labour test. They are also allowed to get time off to sign on at the Labour Exchange as unemployed persons, and to go and see any employer requiring employees.

ARTHUR J. THATCHER,
Labour Party Agent.

HOW TO ORGANISE A FLOWER SHOW

A Useful Article

Last year several local Labour Parties indulged in flower shows, either as events in themselves or as an addition to fête days and similar affairs, and they did so with considerable benefit to themselves, both financially and socially. Now is the time of year when, if such events are to be successful, the preliminaries should be arranged, and we are indebted to Mr. R. Sudell, the Labour Organiser to the Central Southwark Labour Party, who is also secretary to the London Gardens Guild, for permission to use the following notes. Readers will find in them matters both of immediate concern and others of later application, and the article should be filed for future reference.

First form a small working committee who will be responsible for the drawing up of a schedule and regulations, the booking of a hall, the provision of stewards and judges, the

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collection of entrance money, classification of entries, and the distribution of prizes.

This committee should be guided by the following rules:—

(1) Word your schedule carefully and fully, so that there is no possibility of confusion. Distinguish between the use of "kind" and "variety"—roses and carnations are different kinds, Dorothy Perkins and Crimson Ramblers are different varieties.

(2) Give the exact times for the staging to begin and end, for the public to be admitted, and for the exhibits to be removed, and **adhere strictly to them**. Disclaim responsibility for loss or breakage of plants.

(3) Exclude exhibits which have not been grown by the exhibitor for at least two months before the show. See that a declaration to this effect is printed on the entry form and signed by each exhibitor.

(4) Do not ask for impossibilities. A class for twenty-four kinds of flowers would probably frighten off most gardeners. A class for three or six kinds would attract more entries. Prizes might be offered for the best collection of flowers grown in one garden.

(5) To cope with varying conditions, arrange different classes for flowers from front and back gardens. A special class might also be made for flowers from very small gardens. Allotment holders should also be catered for.

(6) To add interest to the exhibition it is allowable to include awards for photographs of gardens, flower sketches and garden models by children, and table decorations, bottled fruits, and preserves by ladies.

(7) In classes for vases of cut flowers, state whether entrants may arrange exhibits at home prior to staging them in the hall.

(8) Do not forget to state on the schedule what classes are only open to amateurs, and to specify what is meant by the word "amateur." The L.G.G. only includes those who cultivate their gardens without paid help.

(9) Stipulate the number of prizes which may be taken by each exhibitor and by members of the same family, and disallow everybody from taking more than one prize in any one class.

(10) See that each exhibit has its card or number affixed, and that it conforms to the conditions of the schedule. The judges may be too busy to count every item if there are many classes.

(11) See that the room is cleared for the judges—exhibitors should on no account be allowed to remain during the judging, even if they are also committee officials.

(12) Invite honorary exhibits from local florists, seedsmen, and nurserymen; by guaranteeing a certain circulation you can obtain advertisements from these and other tradesmen.

In all matters of disputes regarding disqualifications, the committee will of course decide, but it is particularly desirable to avoid friction by accurate wording on the schedule. Exhibitors should be invited to consult the committee where the wording is not quite plain to them.

Further information on any point will be given by the Secretary, London Gardens Guild, 61 Penrose Street, S.E. 17.

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